

Another Wasatch Winter Game In 2002

Paralympics commence only two weeks after the Olympics cease

Jean Croasmun, *Courier Staff*

Less than two weeks after the final medal is awarded in Salt Lakes 2002 Winter Olympics, eyes will turn once again on Utah's winter sports scene when over 1100 competitors representing 40 countries converge on Salt Lake, Ogden, and Wasatch County for the VII Paralympic Winter Games.

The Paralympics Winter Games are intended to act as a parallel to the Olympics for athletes with disabilities. When awarded the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, Salt Lake City was awarded the 2002 Paralympics, too.

There are five categories of events in the Paralympic Winter Games including the biathlon, ice hockey, speed skating, alpine skiing, and cross-country skiing; the biathlon and cross-country skiing events will be held in Wasatch County at Soldier Hollow.

During last weeks Nationals, cross-country sit-ski competitions took place at Soldier Hollow, acting as a precursor for events to come in 2002.

"Candace likes to say it looks like the bar scene from Star Wars," said Mike Bixby, equipment manager for sit-skier Candace Cable who competed in Wasatch County last week, of the diversity of the competitors who attend the Paralympics. Both Bixby and Cable believe the Salt Lake Organizing Committee (SLOC) has a way to go before it's fully prepared for the Paralympic competitions.

The Paralympic were conceived of by



Paralympic events, such as the sit-ski cross country races held at Soldier Hollow last week come to Wasatch County just 10 days after 2002 Winter Olympics.

English neurosurgeon Sir Ludwig Guttman. His goal was to provide athletes with disabilities the opportunity to compete at the same international level as athletes without disabilities. The first Paralympics were held in Rome in 1960 with only 400 athletes. Since the 1992 Paralympic games in Albertville, France, the Winter Olympic host city has also hosted the Paralympic Games.

According to Cable, Paralympic events are extremely popular abroad. But the lack of available equipment and facilities has prevented her sport — cross-country sit-ski, from becoming popular with U. S. athletes. Cable is also convinced that lack of understanding on the part of U.S. audiences has kept Paralympic-style events from the drawing crowds the size of those overseas.

Unlike the Special Olympics, Paralympic competitors have to try-out for their sports teams and be invited to participate. The 1988 Paralympic Summer Games in Seoul, Korea were considered the beginning of modern Paralympics when the emphasis shifted from rehabilitation to sport and athletic competition.

SLOC is the first Olympic organizing committee to completely integrate the organization of both the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. The 2002 Paralympic Winter Games will be held in Utah from March 7 through 16, 2002. *W*



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